

LEGENDS, SONGS, AND CUSTOMS OF DARDISTAN,*

(GILGIT, YASIN, HUNZA, NAGYR, CHITRÁL, &C., AND
KAFIRISTAN).

- 197 I. DARDU LEGENDS, in *Shiná* (the language, with dialectic modifications, of Gilgit, Astor, Guraiz, Chilás, Hódur, Dareyl, Tanglr, etc., and the language of historical songs in Hunza and Nagyr).

(Committed to writing for the first time in 1866,

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- 212 from the dictation of Dards. This race has no written character of its own.)

A.—DEMONS = YATSH¹ (YUECCI?).

- 776 DEMONS are of a gigantic size, and have only *one eye*,
[177] *which is on the forehead*. They used to rule over the mountains and oppose the cultivation of the soil by man. They often dragged people away into their recesses. Since the adoption of the Muhammadan religion, the demons have relinquished their possessions, and only occasionally trouble the believers.

- 776 They do not walk by day, but confine themselves to
823 promenading at night. A spot is shown near Astor, at a village called Bulent, where five large mounds are pointed out which have somewhat the shape of huge baskets.
— Their existence is explained as follows. A Zemindar (cultivator) at Grukôt, a village farther on, on the Kashmir road, had, with great trouble, sifted his grain for storing, and had put it into baskets and sacks. He then went away. The demons came—five in number—carrying huge leather-

101 * "Dardistan," or the country of the Daradas of Hindu mythology, embraces, in the narrowest sense of the term, the Shiná-speaking countries (Gilgit, &c.); in a wider sense, Hunza, Nagyr, Yasin, and Chitrál; and in the widest, also parts of Kafiristan. (See my "Dardistan," part III.)

¹ "Yatsh" means "bad" in Kashmiri.

2 *Legends, Songs, and Customs of Dardistan.*

776 sacks, into which they put the grain. They then went to a
 823 place which is still pointed out and called "*Gué Gutumé*
Yatsheyn gau boki," or "The place of the demons' loads
 at the hollow"—*Gué* being the *Shiná* name for the present
 village of *Gruköt*. There they brought up a huge flat
 stone—which is still shown—and made it into a kind of pan,
 "tawa," for the preparation of bread. But the morning
 dawned and obliged them to disappear; they converted the
 sacks and their contents into earthen mounds, which have
 the shape of baskets and are still shown.

1.—THE WEDDING OF DEMONS.

776 A *Shikari* (sportsman) was once hunting in the hills.
 539 He had taken provisions with him for five days. On the
 sixth day he found himself without any food. Excited and
 fatigued by his fruitless expedition, he wandered into the
 deepest mountain recesses, careless whither he went as
 long as he could find water to assuage his thirst, and a few
 wild berries to allay his hunger. Even that search was un-
 successful, and, tired and hungry, he endeavoured to com-
 pose himself to sleep. Even that comfort was denied him,
 and, nearly maddened with the situation, he again arose and
 looked around him. It was the first or second hour of
 night, and, at a short distance, he descried a large fire
 blazing a most cheerful welcome to the hungry, and now
 chilled, wanderer. He approached it quietly, hoping to
 meet some other sportsman who might provide him with
 food. Coming near the fire, he saw a very large and
 curious assembly of giants, eating, drinking, and singing.

In great terror, he wanted to make his way back, when one
 of the assembly, who had a squint in his eye, got up for the
 purpose of fetching water for the others. He overtook him,
 and asked him whether he was a "child of man." Half
 dead with terror, he could scarcely answer that he was,
 when the demon invited him to join them at the meeting,
 which was described to be a wedding party. The *Shikari*
 replied: "You are a demon, and will destroy me"; on
 which the spirit took an oath, *by the sun and the moon*, that

A PEARL TREE ON THE DEOBANI MOUNTAIN.

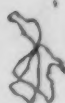
361 On the east of Tashot, a village in the Bagrot Valley, there stands a snow-covered
776 mountain called Deobani. The people say that there is a large pearl tree on its top,
539 which is the property of the fairies and giants. A good mountaineer is said to have once
reached its summit. Gathering a load of the pearls, he started down towards his home.
But he was surprised to see a crowd of giants and fairies coming after him, and, being
frightened by their approach, he thought it better to throw away all the pearls in order
to save his life; he was surprised, however, to find that a fairy still followed him as far as
his house. There he closed his door. While changing his clothes he found that a pearl
was hidden in his shoes. The pearl was then thrown towards the fairy; she picked it up
and disappeared. A similar story is related about Nanga Parbat, a mountain on the
west of Astor.

SHANGALI WEEN.

361 At about two miles east of Danyore, a village about three miles east of Gilgit, there is
778 seen on the northern side of the road leading to the Bagrot Valley a small piece of ground
539 about one yard square surrounded by walls about three feet high. This place is called
695 "Shangali Ween" (place of putting chain). It is said that there used to be a golden
chain hanging in the air without any support. In ancient times, when any case was to be
decided on oath, both the parties were carried there and each of them addressed the
chain in the following manner: "O *Sajo Shangali* (sacred chain), whoever of us is sinful
please accuse him by striking his neck; and the chain used miraculously to whirl round
the neck of the man who was guilty. The man was then convicted and punished by
the authorities according to law. No chain is now found at the spot, and the people
relate an interesting story about its disappearance. They say that two men of the
Bagrot Valley were once coming together to Gilgit: one of them had brought some gold
with him which the other succeeded in stealing. Making a small hole in his stick, he put
the gold secretly into it. The men, after a long quarrel about the lost gold, decided
that the case should be settled by the Shangali. When they were entering the place, the
guilty man gave his stick which contained the gold to the other, and they both began to
beg before the Shangali, asking that, whichever of them had gold in his possession, he
might be struck by the Shangali. The Shangali, who was aware of the trick, was
much enraged at this attempt to deceive, and, considering itself offended, at once dis-
appeared for ever without settling their case. The loser of gold was now very angry,
and in a fit of his anger struck the stick on the walls of the enclosure. The stick broke
and the lost gold was disclosed.

NONG AND CHAKROT BARI.

778 Near Laco village in the Astor district there is a small fountain called Nong.
789 The people consider it a sacred one and offer sacrifices at the place for the ful-
823 filment of their wants. If owing to drought a loss of their crops is expected, or if for any
other reason heavy rain is required, the people used to throw some unclean thing in-
to the spring, such as the bone of a dog; it then began to rain, and continued until the
object was taken out. Owing to the belief that the spring was sacred and, moreover, able



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to inflict harm upon the people, they themselves did not dare to put an unclean thing into the spring; and therefore on such occasions a foreigner was employed to perform this act, receiving as remuneration a large quantity of grain collected for the purpose at the rate of two seers per house. After receiving this grain he threw some unclean thing into the spring; and took it out when the rain was no more required. There are two other similar springs: one in the Bagrot Valley, called Chakrot Bari; and the other near the Tarshing village in the Astor District, called Komachon uts.

"RASHOO AI YUDAINI."

(The Fairies' Drum of Rashoo.)

The Doms of Bulchhi, a village in the Bagrot Valley, have still in their possession a small drum about one foot in diameter and three feet in circumference. This is called "Rashoo ai Yudaini." It was once carefully kept in a handsome cover by Rashoo, a Rono Warir of Gilgit, who had ruled for the chief in that place. It is said, that whenever Rashoo intended to advance against any chief, the Yudaini was brought and kept before him. If it made a noise, without having been beaten by anybody, Rashoo believed it an omen of success. But if it were silent, Rashoo postponed his expedition.

THE HOOF MARK OF A HORSE.

Between Edgah and Balan villages in the Astore district there are seen on a rock near the old road which faces the Phina village, a few small flags. It is said that at this place there is a mark on a stone of the hoof of a horse. The story of the hoof-print is this—The place was once haunted by a giantess, who was a bitter enemy of mankind, and had become the terror of the people. The people wished to get rid of her. By the providence of God, one day a venerable Darwesh—some say that the Darwesh was no one else but Hazrat Khizar himself—halted on the river-bank close to the foot of the Phina village, and saw the giantess across the stream. He flung himself on his horse and, spurring it vigorously, came upon the giantess with the speed of lightning. She had no alternative left but to take to her heels, which she did, leaving the noise of her shrieks behind, and was never seen again. The horse had come upon it with such a vigour that the stone gave way under its weight, and there burst forth from the stone a spring of cool, fresh water. Though there exists no trace of it now, it is still looked upon as a sacred place, and the people from far and near gather together annually to celebrate the event by killing a sheep, feasting upon it, and making merry.

XI.

THE FOOT OF MALIK THE RÁ OF GILGIT.¹

It is said that one of the feet of Malik, an ancient Rá of Gilgit, was naturally formed like the hoof of an *áin*. He took great care to conceal this defect from all people. One of his old servants had, however, a knowledge of the mystery; but he was strictly forbidden by the Rá to disclose the secret. The servant kept it from becoming known

¹ [Cf. the Greek story of Midas and his son, and of how their bodies from was revealed to the people.—Rá]

136 be found numerous flocks of the wild sheep (*O. Vignei*). At an elevation of 11,000 feet, wild onions grow in great profusion, and to this fact the range is indebted for its Chinese name Tsungling. (The Onion Mountains.)

133 The principal difficulty in communication is caused by
135 the rivers, which in winter are shrunk to small dimensions,
316 but in summer, fed by snow-fields and glaciers of enormous extent, become impassable torrents, bringing down tons of soil in their turbid waters. Many of the streams are rich in gold, especially those flowing from the great Rakiposh Mountain, and it is probable that a scientific search for minerals would be well repaid. The natives believe that the gold is generated by the glaciers, because the greatest quantity is found in the glacier mud, and there are traditions of small but rich veins of earth having been occasionally laid bare by earthquakes. Gold-washing is only practised in winter, and then by none but the poorest and meanest of the population, though the quantity found even with the rude apparatus employed is sometimes very remunerative. The gold itself is of fair quality, the best being of twenty carats.

361 Nearly half way between Gilgit and the Indus is the
316 Bagrot Valley, which contains several flourishing villages, and is capable of supporting a population of 2,000 or 3,000 souls. The Bagrot gold-washings are celebrated for the quantity and fine quality of the gold they yield, and the valley contains many signs of mineral wealth. It was a favourite summer resort of the old Gilgit rulers, and was their last place of refuge when hard pressed by external enemies. The Bagrot people belong almost entirely to the Shin caste.

[564] A mile below Gilgit itself the Hunza River joins that of
133 Gilgit. Though fordable in winter, this is in summer a deep and rapid torrent more than a hundred yards in breadth, bringing down with it an enormous quantity of soil from the lofty

[648] mountains it drains. Cashmere jurisdiction extends some 25 miles up the valley to a point at which the river makes a sudden bend from a westerly course to south-south-east. As generally happens where these abrupt changes of course in a stream are found, the river here flows between perpendicular rocks, across the face of which none but the most expert cragsmen can find a path. On the occasion of my visit to Hunza in 1876, I suddenly found myself confronted with a more difficult and dangerous piece of ground than I had ever traversed in a tolerably large experience of Himalayan sport. For nearly half a mile it was necessary to scramble over

The ordinary Mahomedan calendar is, however, coming into use, especially among the Ashimadek class. The days of the week are named according to the Mahomedan calendar, except that Friday is named Adinna.

In Bushkar and Torwal, the Mahomedan calendar is followed. In the latter place the ordinary names are preserved, in the former the months are named—

Hussan Hoosein.

Safar.

Purum ishpo (*First sister*).

Dowim ishpo (*Second sister*).

Tiooi ishpo (*Third sister*).

Chot ishpo (*Fourth sister*).

Soorpi (*Great month*).

Shokabder.

Roz.

Lokylil (*Small festival*).

Milna (*Intervening*).

Ganyil (*Great festival*).

The constellation of the Great Bear is called "the maiden's corpse," the four corner stars being supposed to represent a bier: the small star above the middle star of the tail is called the "star of life," as it is supposed to be invisible to a person forty days before death. The pleiades are called the flock of sheep; a comet, "the star with a tail," is supposed to portend the death of a king. The milky way is called the "track of the cow and horse," the tradition being that in the broad part about the middle the horse fell down from going too fast, while the cow travelled safely. The world is supposed to rest on the horns of a cow, which shakes its head occasionally at the sins of the inhabitants, and so causes earthquakes.

The west and south are always spoken of as up, and the north and east as down. A man going west or south to a place talks of going up to it. Fairies and demons that live in caves among the mountains or in desert places, have a prominent place in the belief of the Dards. Dr. Leitner has written an account of the Yetch and its female counterpart the Roof. In Boorishki they are known as Phoot and Billuss. Madness is supposed to be caused by a demon casting its shadow over a person, while the shadow of a fairy confers the gift of prophecy. Demons assume the appearance of human beings to lure men to destruction, but they are recognisable by their feet being turned backwards.

In Gilgit, Hunza, and Nager the ruler's family is supposed to be specially under the protection of a guardian fairy called Yoodeni. A drum, called the Yoodeni drum, is always kept on the top of the ruler's castle. When it is heard to sound at certain festivals and at critical times it presages good fortune. Nobody must try to see the Yoodeni, or look in that direction

"Chili", or cedar worship, and of the Shin feast of 178 sowing synchronised, and the two thus became welded 24/ together. The connection now is limited to a certain amount of wheat being smoked over a cedar wood fire, and of cedar twigs being in use next day when the sowing takes place. From a portion of the smoked grain a large unleavened bannock is made overnight, which is carried before the Rá or Chief of Gilgit when he rides out next morning to the sowing. Arrived on the selected ground the headman of the village holds up to the Rá the skirt of his choga full of the smoked grain, and into this the Rá throws small quantities of gold dust. The golden grain is [823] • then scattered amongst the circle of villagers, the ceremony being repeated till the grain has been thrown to all four points of the compass. The Rá then dismounts, a plough is brought, and, taking the handles, the Chief draws two furrows, one running east, the second west, and over these he again scatters the golden seed. A goat is then sacrificed, the drums [712] strike up, and the Rá rides off, the rest of the day being one of continuous feasting, polo-playing, drumming, and dancing.

There are many other festivals, almost all con- 24/ nected with agriculture; spring-time and harvest, autumn and winter, are all marked by appropriate feasts. The Yudeni drum, or fairy's drum, which 776 was kept on the top of every Chief's castle, played a 777 part in the ancient ceremonies. It was very unlucky to look towards it while the sounds rang out; if the fairy drummer was seen, the direst calamities followed. I never to my knowledge heard the fairy drum my- 776 self, but no feast in the old days was complete